The Annual Report
of the Medical Officer of Health
for the Urban District of Shanklin 1894.

Gentlemen.

Towards the end of last year the area of the Urban District of Shanklin was considerably extended. It is needless for me to enter at any length into this question of the extension of the district, seeing that an exhaustive enquiry was held by the County Council, I only allude to it from the point of view of Sanitary administration and from that standpoint there can be no doubt but that the change was most desirable, for a considerable portion of the town of Shanklin was in the anomalous position of not being in Shanklin and therefore not under the local administration of the town of which it formed an important part. — It was needful for me to mention this as in dealing with the statistics for the past year I have omitted the newly acquired part, as it has only been part of your district for three months, and therefore to include it would lead to confusion. —

During the past year there have occurred within your district 56 births, viz 26 males and 30 females,

that is at the rate of 12·4 per 1000 of population.

There have been 44 deaths registered, 18 males and 26 females, or at the rate of 9·2 per 1000, and that I think it must be admitted is an exceedingly low death rate for an urban district.

From the point of view of age the deaths have occurred as follows.—

Under	1	year			-	4	deaths
Over	1	year	and	under	5	years	- 10 "
"	5	"	"	"	15	"	- 3 "
"	15	"	"	"	25	"	- 2 "
"	25	"	"	"	65	"	- 13 "
"	65	"					- 12 "
					Total.		44

As to causation the deaths were as follows.—

7	were	due to	Diseases of the Heart.-
7	"	"	Diphtheria.—
4	"	"	Cerebral Haemorrhage.-
4	"	"	Cancer.—
3	"	"	Phthisis
2	"	"	Influenza & complications
2	"	"	Premature birth.-
2	"	"	Bright's disease.-
2	"	"	Bronchitis.—
33			

2	were due to	Infantile Convulsions
1	was "	Pneumonia
1	" "	Intestinal Obstruction
1	" "	Ulceration of the Bowels
1	" "	Tubercular Meningitis.
1	" "	Simple ditto.
1	" "	Senile decay
1	" "	Erysipelas.
1	" "	Strangulated Hernia
1	" "	Internal Haemorrhage.
Total. 44		

During the year there have been notified to me two (2) cases of Erysipelas, one in August and one in September, the former of which proved fatal. —

Six cases of Enteric Fever have been reported within your district, the first occurred during the 2nd quarter at an Inn, and was in all probability an imported case, at all events I could find no local cause, and it remained an isolated case. — During the 3rd quarter there were 5 cases; but these were not due to any general cause as water supply &c. — One was undoubtedly contracted on the Continent, the disease becoming manifest the day after the

arrival of the visitor in Shankelin .. Two cases were contracted at Newport, One was contracted at Sandown; ~~but~~ not by any Sanitary defect, but by the victim carelessly drinking some stagnant water.- The other case was due to the blocking of a house drain and the sink becoming filled up with decomposing filth .- It is a matter for regret that the district has been visited during the past year by an outbreak of Diphtheria .- There have been notified 44 cases of the disease, of which terminated fatally, that is the deaths amounted to 15·5 per cent which is certainly a low mortality for that disease .- It may be of interest to consider the mortality in such outbreaks as we have just passed through, in relation to the mortality occurring in the cases treated by the recently introduced, Antitoxin .- Bearing in mind that the cases presenting themselves for treatment by antitoxin are probably mostly severe cases, at the same time one cannot overlook the fact that in an epidemic such as we have had a considerable number of the mildest cases escape notification altogether through their not coming under the notice of any medical man and thereby escaping recognition .-

During the 1st quarter (January to March) there were notified five (5) cases with one death, whereas during the 2nd quarter there were no cases of

Diphtheria notified at all – But again during the 3rd quarter the disease reappeared when 11 cases were notified with 3 deaths, so that while numerically greater the cases were less fatal – The epidemic has been limited almost entirely to a somewhat restricted area of the district viz that part lying in close proximity to the Parochial Schools. –

With the exception of three adults, all residing within 50 yards of the said Schools, the sufferers have all been children and these children with scarcely an exception attended the Parochial Schools, but of course one must bear in mind that probably 90% of the children in this district do attend this School. –

However it was evident that whether the School had any causal connection with the outbreak or not, it was certainly the means of spreading it, & the Schools were therefore closed on the 22nd of July for 6 weeks. This was followed by cessation of the epidemic, the last case being notified on the 30th July. – The Schools were reopened in the middle of September. – No further case occurred till October 5th. – Frequent inspection of the School premises failed to detect any sanitary defect; but in the immediate vicinity of the School and adjoining the Schools there is some waste land which was used for depositing refuse and at that time I found a deposit of

decomposing animal matter within a few feet of one of the School windows which was at once removed & the place disinfected .— The late Local Board prohibited very wisely the further depositing of any refuse upon this land .— At the lower boundary of this piece of land there runs a brook which higher up in its course is polluted by overflow from cesspits and it came under my notice that children had been seen drinking water from this brook, which must have been highly injurious if not the actual cause of disease .—

If you proceed with the proposed Silden Road Sewer before next summer this risk will be avoided in future .— There are however other sources of pollution of this stream which I have already reported to you and which you are taking means to abolish .— I believe it is your intention to proceed with this new (Silden Road) sewer as soon as possible, and it is most desirable that you should do so, for it will do away with several objectionable cesspits situate in the Silden Road neighbourhood. It would also enable you to efficiently drain the slaughter houses and so prevent them polluting the above mentioned stream .— If however the land in which the slaughter houses now stand is to be used as a pleasure ground, their removal will

then become imperative. –

I am pleased to learn that you intend to carry out at an early date an improved method of scavenging, which was discussed by the late Board. – There can be no doubt but that the proposed change would be a great improvement on the present system in which the ashpits are left at times unclaned for a period sufficiently long to be both a nuisance and a danger to public health, and this is especially the case during the hottest part of the year when the population within your district is almost doubled. –

I would suggest that the abolition of ashpits and their substitution by portable ashbins, of ~~smaller~~ size that one man could carry them, would facilitate matters greatly. – It would reduce the cost of scavenging very materially and would be more effective and cleanly. – Would it not be well to have covered carts to carry away the refuse, as it blows about the streets from open carts ?. –

When there is a snowfall such as we had for the last two winters it is not efficiently dealt with. – I observe that you have recently passed a resolution to the effect that men be employed by the Council to clear away the snow. – That is doubtless

sufficient for the main street traffic ; but by such means you would have to employ a very large staff to clear the footpaths properly and to meet this difficulty would it not be well to add to your bye laws (as is the custom in most other towns) a law compelling the various householders to remove the snow, before a certain hour in the morning, from the extent of footpath adjacent to their houses and grounds. —

When the late Board decided to suspend their efforts in endeavouring to obtain a greater water supply I expressed to them my regret, and I trust that you will as soon as possible renew those efforts. In saying this I do not wish to minimise the work done by the late Board in carrying out extensive boring and more especially their completion of a new reservoir thereby greatly increasing the storage water. This increase of storage capacity may however have had the effect of leading some of your members to suppose that there is not the same need for speedily acquiring a greater supply of water. Permit me however to remind you that the whole of your storage water would only last you about one week during the months of

August and therefore you are practically dependent upon your inlet, Moreover you have only an intermident water supply .- With regard to the water supply of the newly acquired portion of your district, it is most desirable that wells should as far as possible be superseded by a supply from Shanklin or Sandown mains, - Nearly all these wells receive surface soakage water and are a constant source of danger from becoming contaminated by sink waste from burst or blocked pipes, and also from defective or blocked drains .- In the majority of cases the Well is so situated that, any leakage from drains and sinks or any offensive liquid thrown down behind the house or put over the garden, is almost certain to pollute the well. -

It is a matter for congratulation that you have already commenced to lay the new High Street, North Road and Hope Road Sewer, the inital stages of this project originated with the late Board, & they having successfully laid their case before the Local Government Board it remains for you to complete it.- No one can doubt but that it was absolutely necessary, it being evident that the rapid increase of houses had rendered the present main sewer

(especially the North Road part of it) quite inadequate. —

I am Gentlemen
Your obedient Servant
John Cowper MB
Medical Officer of Health for
Shanklin Urban District
2nd February 1895